



Laurel Hill

master plan news

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From Lorton Prison to Laurel Hill

With its closing in 2001 and the property's transfer to Fairfax County on July 15, 2002, Lorton Prison's 90 years of operation came to an end. Now, in order to realize the potential of this property, Fairfax County has embarked on a master planning process to develop a vision and a strategy for turning this former prison site into a world-class place where people will want to come, spend time, and enjoy. With over 300 buildings, 2,400 acres, and a rich legacy to draw from, this former prison site, renamed Laurel Hill after the 18th century residence of a Revolutionary War patriot, has the potential to become a unique and treasured resource for all residents of Fairfax County.

Laurel Hill's History

When Theodore Roosevelt commissioned a new prison for the District of Columbia at the beginning of the 20th century, he envisioned a place where inmates could be rehabilitated through a hard day's work. Rehabilitation, he believed, could

be facilitated if prisoners were provided with fresh air, natural light, and a place to live and work that would instill a sense of order and responsibility through the design and layout of buildings and space. So with this thinking in mind, the Lorton Reformatory became more like a campus than a traditional inner-city jail and a model for Progressive-Era correctional facilities.

Over the years, as Lorton grew to accommodate over 8,000 inmates and attitudes and challenges within the field of corrections changed, the appearance of the facility changed as well. By the mid 1980s, the Lorton complex consisted of four separate prisons and over a million square feet of space for adult male offenders and young male and women offenders as well. In addition, Lorton became the location for a premiere Nike missile site during the 1950s and the Resource Recovery Facility for the county in the late 1980s.

Today, amidst all the changes that have taken place, the colonial-style courtyards and arcades built by Lorton inmates from handmade bricks commemorate a rich and diverse history that inspires us to plan for the future of this former prison site.

What is a Master Plan?

Given the great number of buildings and vast open space, redeveloping Laurel Hill provides a wonderful opportunity and a daunting challenge. For this reason, a master planning process is needed to figure out how to best reuse many of these buildings and identify the park and recreation requirements of a changing community. While the county's Comprehensive Plan outlines the general types of uses for Laurel Hill, the master plan will provide the details. By presenting images of what the future Laurel Hill may look like and recommendations as to how this transformation could take place, this plan will serve as a blueprint for preserving some of the existing resources while making way for new uses and facilities over time.

What are the Plan's Goals?

The master planning process is an intensive twelve-month process that began in the fall of 2002 and will continue through 2003. During this period, the Laurel Hill Adaptive Reuse Committee, appointed by the Board of Supervisors; the Fairfax County Park Authority; and the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority will develop a set of ideas and recommendations for

their respective areas of Laurel Hill. While the Adaptive Reuse Committee will help identify specific uses for the former Occoquan Workhouse and Central/Maximum Facility, the two Park Authorities will work on plans for the park and recreational areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan. These areas include the former Youth Facility that will be transferred to the Regional Park Authority, and the remaining park property that will be transferred to the County Park Authority. The goals of this planning are to:



Location of Laurel Hill Site



- Plan and utilize the property to its full potential as a world-class asset for Fairfax County residents
- Identify ways to appropriately reuse the historic buildings
- Integrate the reuse of these buildings with surrounding park and recreation facilities
- Adhere to requirements associated with taking over this property from the Federal Government including those outlined in the County's Comprehensive Plan

What Does "World Class" Mean?

One of the goals of the master planning process is to turn Laurel Hill into a world-class asset for Fairfax County. Considering the current resources on the property, some suggestions for what this term means include the following:

- Showcase the architecture of the site in a unique and beautiful way
- Use trails and paths to connect buildings and spaces to each other as well as the larger community
- Preserve much of the natural environment and protect native species
- Integrate the various uses to create a sense of place and enjoyment
- Provide opportunities for locating different kinds of uses together in an exciting way
- Build and leverage collaborative partnerships

As the planning process moves forward, residents and community groups will be asked to comment on these definitions and to share their point of view.

About the Site

The 2,400 acres of Laurel Hill are bounded by South Run to the north, Interstate 95 to the east, the Occoquan River to the south, and by Hooes and Ox Roads (VA Route 123) to the west. The former prison property located to the west side of Ox Road is not contained within the boundaries of Laurel Hill and is currently owned by the Fairfax County Water Authority. The Occoquan Park located on the river side of the property

Picturesque landscape features within the site



Unique & historic architecture elements within the complex



and operated by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority is part of Laurel Hill and includes one of the kilns used to make the bricks from which the early prison facilities were built.

According to the county's Comprehensive Plan, only a small portion of the land located on the south side of Silverbrook Road has been identified for redevelopment for private, commercial use and may be developed as an extended care facility for seniors with supporting retail use. The majority of the remaining parcels of the property are designated for adaptive reuse of historic and non-historic buildings (approximately 150 acres), park land and open space (approximately 1,600 acres), a high school and middle school site (approximately 120 acres), and existing uses such as the continued

operation of the Resource Recovery Facility and adaptive reuse of a former landfill (approximately 503 acres).

What Issues Will be Addressed?

The master planning process will address many issues. These include:

Uses In order to make this site available to residents and visitors, the plan will look at specific types of uses that will shape the new character of Laurel Hill. Though there are many possibilities, these may include educational and cultural facilities, community services, as well as outdoor and indoor recreational opportunities. Proposals are being solicited from and provided by a wide range of organizations. In addition, residents will also be encouraged to provide their ideas.

Adaptive Reuse The need to preserve many of the historic buildings on the property is a challenge and an opportunity. The plan will outline which buildings are suitable to reuse and maintain and which are imperative to keep for the preservation of the site's historic character. It will also define what types of uses will be appropriate in different areas of the site due to their nature and compatibility with one another and the context of the site.

Park Uses

Because of the amount of open space on the property, the planning process will consider ways to provide for numerous park and recreational uses while also conserving sensitive environmental areas. Together, the Fairfax County Park Authority and the Regional Park Authority will work to plan the park facilities and get the parks open and available for public use.

Access and Circulation

The master plan will provide a framework on how to link the site safely and efficiently between the buildings as well as to the greater community. This could happen through a network of bike and pedestrian trails, bridle paths and nature trails, as well as roads. The point is to make the site accessible and pleasant to move through in a seamless and safe way.

What is the Planning Process?

The process diagram shown below illustrates the overall process for preparing the master plan. The process includes four main phases:

Phase 1 includes collection and analysis of existing information, as well as communicating with interested groups. This phase also includes gathering proposals and ideas from the county and community for reuse of the buildings and adjacent areas. Phase 1 will include a community meeting in the spring of 2003.

Phase 2 is review of the proposals and ideas and development of some alternative concept plans that integrate these ideas into a cohesive plan. These alternative concept plans will then be evaluated based on a number of criteria. Phase 2 will include a community meeting in the late spring and early summer of 2003.

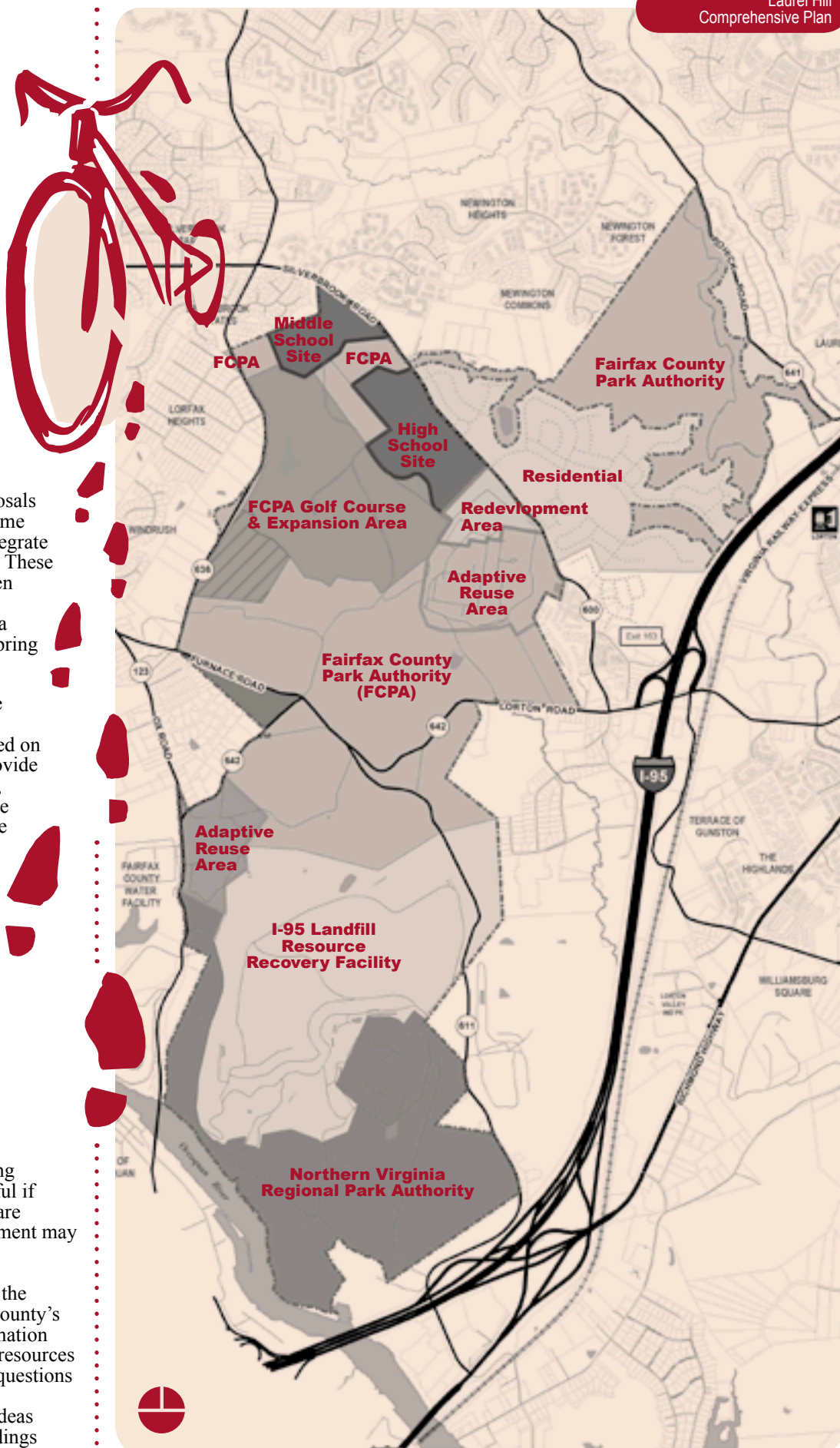
Phase 3 is development of the draft master plan. The plan will document the preferred plan based on the evaluation in phase 2 and provide more detail on financial analysis, phasing and physical design. The draft plan will be presented to the community in the summer of 2003.

Phase 4 is the preparation of the final master plan. The final plan will incorporate the comments on the draft plan

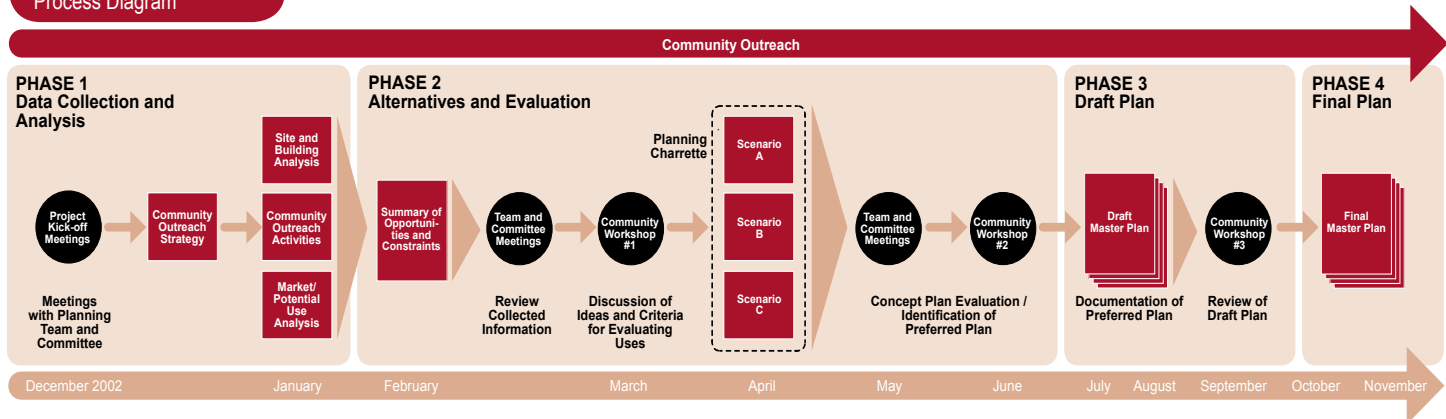
Resource Information for Getting Involved

The Laurel Hill master planning process will only be successful if residents throughout the county are willing to get involved. Involvement may include:

- Learning about Laurel Hill via the Internet or visiting one of the county's public libraries for more information
- Contacting one or more of the resources listed on the reverse side with questions or opinions
- Helping to shape and support ideas for adaptively reusing the buildings



Master Plan Process Diagram



or developing recreation facilities by attending one or more community meetings. Individuals or groups who are interested in participating in the process are encouraged to access one or more of the resources listed below.

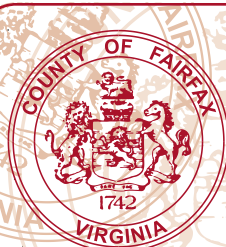
- Information about the history of Laurel Hill along with photos and maps can be found on the Laurel Hill page on the County's web site at: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/laurelhill.
- Information about meetings and

upcoming activities related to planning for reusing buildings and park and recreation facilities is available by contacting:

- Office of the County Executive
703-324-2531 (V)
703-222-5494 (TTY)
coexec@fairfaxcounty.gov
- Fairfax County Park Authority
703-324-8662 (V) 703-324-3988 (TTY)
parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov
- and the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority 703-352-5900 (V)

- Information for organizations or institutions interested in submitting a proposal for adaptively reusing one or more of the buildings on Laurel Hill are encouraged to E-mail or call Mary Ashton:
703-324-3408 (V)
703-222-5494 (TTY)
mary.ashton@fairfaxcounty.gov

• This information will be provided in alternative formats, such as large print or Braille, upon request. Please contact the Office of the County Executive at the above listed numbers.



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